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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Report of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities on its twenty-second session

(Rome, 23-25 January 2002)

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I. Introduction

1. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held its twenty-second session at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome from 23 to 25 January 2002. He Changchui of FAO was elected Chairman. The list of participants is attached as annex I to the present report.

2. The Director of the Research, Extension and Training Division of FAO opened the Meeting. He noted the significant progress made in space technologies such as Earth observation, global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) and satellite telecommunications for a wide range of applications, as discussed by the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III).¹ He outlined the FAO activities involving spatial data, including the GeoNetwork, which aimed to make that organization's spatial data and information holdings available to a wide range of users in both the public and the private domain. He welcomed the fact that the Meeting would consider preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002. He noted that an important part of the Summit would be bridging the digital divide by promoting equitable access to basic information and that space technology could play an important role in that process. He hoped that the Inter-Agency Meeting would develop proposals for more result-oriented inter-agency cooperation for space activities for sustainable development.

3. The Meeting adopted the agenda contained in annex II to the present report.

II. Substantive questions considered at the Meeting

A. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas

1. Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the activities of the organizations of the United

Nations system in the areas of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes

4. The Secretary of the Meeting briefed participants on the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies during 2001, bringing to their attention matters relating to inter-agency coordination. The Expert on Space Applications reported on the future orientation of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and on activities planned for the Programme in 2002 and 2003, inviting organizations of the United Nations system to participate in activities of interest to them.

5. Representatives of participating organizations reported on activities and plans of their organizations for 2002, 2003 and beyond. Reports highlighted activities involving extensive cooperation between various organizations of the United Nations system. The Meeting welcomed the fact that the results of activities, described in the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system (A/AC.105/780), were being used increasingly both within and outside the United Nations system.

6. The Meeting noted that both the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) were active users of space-based services and products. For instance, WHO was successfully using remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS) to address health-related issues. The Meeting agreed that further efforts should be made to encourage UNDP, WHO, the World Food Programme and other United Nations agencies concerned to participate in the Inter-Agency Meeting. The Meeting also agreed that organizations participating in the Meeting should assist the Office in identifying possible focal points from UNDP and WHO.

7. The Meeting noted that the cost of Earth observation data was an obstacle to its use by organizations of the United Nations system. In that context, the Meeting took note of the efforts of the United Nations Office for Project Services to negotiate access to data from Earth observation satellites such as the Satellite pour l'observation de la Terre (SPOT) and Ikonos on a priority basis and at reduced cost. The Meeting also noted that some satellite data distributors had decided

to provide free access to some data sets to be used for education, research and other purposes and welcomed that development.

8. The Meeting noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs was in consultation with the European Space Agency (ESA) to make the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters accessible by all the organizations of the United Nations system.

9. The Meeting emphasized that the importance of promoting access to information through the Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space (resolution 41/65, annex) be restated by the Secretary-General at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

10. The Meeting invited the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to consider making a presentation on the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in 2003, to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session, in 2002.

11. The Meeting recommended that, in future years, organizations inform it about observances such as international years, so that other organizations could take note of those themes in the development of any related activities.

2. Methods to strengthen further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities

12. The Meeting noted that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was considering an agenda item entitled "Means and mechanisms for strengthening inter-agency cooperation and increasing the use of space applications and services within and among entities of the United Nations system" under a three-year work plan from 2001 to 2003. The Meeting noted that the Subcommittee had invited the Meeting to identify barriers to greater use of space applications and services within the United Nations system and to suggest means and mechanisms to eliminate those barriers that would be considered by the Subcommittee.

13. The Meeting had before it information provided by organizations of the United Nations system (A/AC.105/C.1/L.241 and Corr.1 and Add.1) in response to a list of questions circulated by the Office

for Outer Space Affairs. Among other things, the information included potential obstacles to inter-agency coordination identified by organizations and ways and means of strengthening inter-agency efforts to expand the use of space science and technology.

14. In view of the fact that there were different constituencies in the governing bodies of each organization of the United Nations system, the Meeting noted that a delegation to one forum of the system was not necessarily fully aware, in a timely manner, of the directions pursued by a delegation of the same country in a different forum. The Meeting therefore felt that closer coordination and timely information-sharing among government agencies represented at different forums on issues relating to space activities would be beneficial. That might be achieved through existing government mechanisms, resulting in coordination efforts similar to those being made by the organizations of the United Nations system at the inter-agency level.

15. In order to ensure that information on space activities addressed to the head of an organization reached the appropriate units in that organization, the Meeting recommended that those organizations of the United Nations system which had not yet done so should be requested to designate an official focal point on outer space activities.

16. The Meeting took note with appreciation of a draft brochure prepared by the Office for Outer Space Affairs. The brochure was intended to summarize how space technology was being used for sustainable development by the United Nations system in a way that would be interesting and understandable to decision makers and the general public. The brochure would also describe initiatives and activities derived from the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system.

17. The Meeting agreed that the draft should form the basis for a brochure to be distributed prior to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and updated periodically thereafter. The Meeting agreed that, to ensure that the text was of the highest quality possible, agencies should submit comments on the draft text circulated at the Meeting by the first week of February to the Office for Outer Space Affairs. The Meeting noted that the Office would provide a timetable for preparation of the brochure, including the layout of the

brochure, aiming at the finalization of the draft brochure by the end of March 2002.

18. The Meeting welcomed the offer of the Office for Outer Space Affairs to develop the brochure with input from other entities of the United Nations system and to fund a limited print run. The Meeting also noted the Office's invitation to other organizations to contribute text, graphics and funding for the brochure.

3. Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of organizations in the United Nations system

19. The Meeting had before it the draft report of the Secretary-General entitled "Coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system: programme of work for 2002, 2003 and future years". It was the twenty-sixth report on the subject, containing information from organizations of the United Nations system in an integrated form, outlining planned activities by field of application.

20. The Meeting noted that, in accordance with the agreement reached during its twenty-first session, the draft report consisted of the following sections:

- I. Introduction;
- II. Participants in outer space activities of the United Nations system and matrix of outer space programmes;
- III. Policies and strategies pertaining to coordination of space-related activities;
- IV. Current space-related activities;
- V. Review of matters related to the coordination of activities within the United Nations system.

21. Section III of the draft report concerned (a) enhancing partnerships with non-governmental entities; and (b) development of laws, standards and ethics relating to space activities. Section IV discusses (a) protecting the Earth's environment and managing natural resources; (b) using space applications for human security, development and welfare; (c) utilizing and facilitating information and communications technology for development; (d) using and improving satellite positioning and location capabilities; (e) building capacity for space applications for

sustainable development and enhancing education; (f) advancing scientific knowledge of space and protecting the space environment; and (g) other activities.

22. The Meeting reviewed the draft report and made suggestions and comments. The Meeting adopted the report as amended. The Meeting was informed that the final text of the report (A/AC.105/780) would be made available to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session.

23. The Meeting also agreed that it should review in the near future the structure of the report in order to streamline the information contained in it.

24. The Meeting noted that the request for contributions to the draft report to be reviewed at its twenty-third session would be sent by the Secretariat by the end of August, that contributions should be submitted by agencies by the start of December and that the draft report would be distributed for review by participating agencies at the beginning of January.

B. Promoting the applications of space technology in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21

25. The participants reported on their organizations' respective achievements and plans for the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Meeting noted that substantial efforts that had been made by the organizations of the United Nations system had led to significant achievements in a wide range of preparatory activities for the World Summit. Activities included the preparation of documents and the organization of several side events. The Meeting agreed that the information-sharing among the organizations had resulted in cross-fertilization of their activities, creating synergies to promote the usefulness of space applications in sustainable development. The Meeting also welcomed the fact that many of the activities were open for participation by all organizations. The Meeting stressed that further efforts should be made by all organizations to ensure that space-related activities would be incorporated as cross-cutting issues in each of their preparatory activities for the World Summit.

26. The Meeting noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs would be organizing a workshop that would highlight the usefulness of space technology for

sustainable development shortly before the World Summit. The Office for Outer Space Affairs and ESA had agreed to co-sponsor the workshop. The workshop, to be held in South Africa, was open to participation by other organizations.

27. The Office for Outer Space Affairs would also organize a workshop on the use of space technology for disaster management for the benefit of African countries in June 2002 in the framework of a series of regional workshops on the subject. The workshop, to be co-sponsored by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), ESA and the Economic Commission for Africa, would present another opportunity for inter-agency cooperation in preparation for the World Summit.

28. The Meeting also noted that the Office for Outer Space Affairs was providing technical advice to the Government of Colombia in the organization of the Fourth Space Conference of the Americas. The Conference, to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 13 to 17 May 2002, would provide input to regional preparations for the World Summit and would present another opportunity for cooperation between organizations of the United Nations system.

29. The Meeting noted that, pursuant to the agreement reached at its twenty-first session, the secretariat had invited CEOS to participate in its discussions on this agenda item. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Committee for accepting that invitation.

30. The Meeting noted that CEOS was contributing to the preparatory conferences for the World Summit, preparing brochures that were illustrative of the capabilities of Earth observation and possibly organizing side events in order to raise the awareness of participants in the Summit of the usefulness of remote sensing in sustainable development. Some of the events to be organized by CEOS would aim at analysing the evolution of monitoring policies within the framework of international conventions, determine the needs for information and identify which of those needs could be met more efficiently with remote sensing applications. CEOS welcomed the participation of the organizations of the United Nations system in any of the activities it would organize and emphasized its willingness to coordinate its actions with them. Its preparations for participation in the World Summit

process mentioned above were being conducted in close cooperation with the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) Partnership.

31. The Meeting invited further proposals for inter-agency activities relating to the World Summit and noted that the information thereon could be circulated through the Office for Outer Space Affairs. The Meeting agreed that, through the Office for Outer Space Affairs, entities such as CEOS and the IGOS Partnership could provide further information on their preparations for the World Summit to organizations participating in the Inter-Agency Meeting.

C. Review of electronic information networking in the United Nations system

32. The Secretary briefed the participants on the status of the web site on the coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system (www.uncosa.unvienna.org), which the Office for Outer Space Affairs had created following the agreement of the Meeting at its twenty-first session. It was recalled that the information on the web site was to include news and announcements, a schedule of activities, a directory of participating organizations and information relating to the Inter-Agency Meeting.

33. The Meeting noted that the Office would encourage organizations to submit updated information for the web site by sending quarterly reminders to the focal points.

34. The representative of ITU indicated various possibilities that existed using Internet services that would facilitate the sharing of information and preparation of documents. The Meeting requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to work with ITU to develop a concrete proposal to use electronic networking for electronic document handling, such as in preparing the draft of the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of outer space activities and for information-sharing in a user-friendly format. The Meeting welcomed the offer by the representative of ITU to assist the Office in developing the proposal in time for review at the twenty-third session of the Meeting, in 2003.

D. Review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III)

35. The Secretary briefed the participants on the progress made in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III through the establishment of action teams. The Meeting noted that, following the request by the Committee, the Office for Outer Space Affairs had circulated a questionnaire to the organizations of the United Nations system to identify the recommendations for which they wished to be members of the respective action teams. The Meeting had before it the list of points of contact for the action teams and a document containing the lists of Member States and organizations of the United Nations system as well as the international organizations having observer status with the Committee that had indicated an interest in participating in or in receiving further information on the development of specific action teams.

36. The Meeting welcomed the establishment by the Committee of action teams to implement some of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The Meeting noted that the organizations of the United Nations system would be interested in participating in the action teams within their competence and resources. The Meeting noted that it was important for each action team to share detailed information on the development of their plans, including objectives, anticipated outcomes, implementation strategies and financial implications, to enable the organizations of the United Nations system to participate, within their resources, as partners.

37. The Meeting stressed that in carrying out their work the action teams should take into account and utilize the existing international coordination and cooperation mechanisms, such as the IGOS Partnership. The Meeting invited the action teams to take stock of existing mechanisms and programmes relating to their work in order to develop better linkage, synergy and collaboration among the various mechanisms and programmes.

38. The Meeting recommended that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-ninth session should consider the possibility of having, wherever appropriate, a combination of Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and relevant entities as coordinators for some of the action teams.

39. The Meeting requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to transmit to the Subcommittee the views of the Meeting on the action teams and requested the Office to report to it at its twenty-third session on the status of participation of the organizations of the United Nations system in the action teams.

40. The Meeting recalled that it had stressed that the heads of organizations of the United Nations system should be made more aware of the work of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities and that the work of the Meeting should be included in the machinery of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (formerly the Administrative Committee on Coordination).

41. The Secretary briefed the participants on the replies received from organizations of the United Nations system concerning how the work of the Inter-Agency Meeting could be included in the machinery of the Board and actions taken by the Office. The Meeting stressed that its work should also be brought to the attention of the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management.

42. The Meeting recalled the agreement reached at its twenty-first session that organizations participating in the Meeting should collectively formulate a message to the heads of organizations of the United Nations system and to policy makers in order to highlight the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of space applications. The message might indicate how space applications could contribute to the implementation of some of the major recommendations made recently in the United Nations system.

43. The Meeting noted that the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had sent a letter to the Secretary-General to bring to his attention the need to consider the contributions of space science and technology in achieving the objectives of major United Nations conferences. The Meeting also noted that the letter had been issued as a document of the General Assembly (A/56/306) under

agenda items related to the review of recent United Nations conferences.

44. The Meeting noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 56/51 of 10 December 2001, had invited organizations of the United Nations system to identify recommendations of major United Nations conferences that could be implemented with the use of space science and technology.

45. The Meeting noted that most of the issues addressed in the United Nations conferences held in recent years would be considered at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In that regard, the Meeting agreed that the Office for Outer Space Affairs should analyse the outcome of the World Summit, with the assistance of organizations of the United Nations system, in order to identify recommendations that could be better implemented with the use of space science and technology.

46. The Meeting agreed that it should continue to consider at its twenty-third session the item entitled "Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III)". The Meeting also agreed that a review of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development should be conducted under a separate agenda item at its twenty-third session.

E. Other matters

47. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the information provided in the technical presentations made by W. Wagner of the Technical University of Vienna on the Hydroscat and by FAO on the GeoNetwork. Furthermore, the Meeting encouraged the ongoing development and interchange of expertise and information on the GeoNetwork, UNEP.Net of the United Nations Environment Programme and related applications for improved access to and analyses of relevant data and other information among the organizations participating in the Inter-Agency Meeting. The Meeting also recommended that those organizations examine the possibilities of participating in those and similar efforts.

III. Future programme of work

48. The Meeting agreed that at its twenty-third session, in 2003, it should consider the following items:

1. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Methods to strengthen further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities;
 - (c) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system;
 - (d) Review of the content and structure of the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system.
2. Space-related outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
3. Electronic information networking in the United Nations system.
4. Implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III).
5. Other matters.

49. The participants expressed their appreciation to FAO for hosting the twenty-second session of the Inter-Agency Meeting. The Meeting agreed that its twenty-third session should be held at the United Nations Office at Vienna. The Meeting noted that that session might be scheduled from 22 to 24 January 2003 and that that would be confirmed by the Office for Outer

Space Affairs following the thirty-ninth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

Notes

- ¹ See *Report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 19-30 July 1999* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.I.3).

Annex I**List of participants at the twenty-second session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Rome from 23 to 25 January 2002**

Chairman: He Changchui (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Secretary: T. Chiku (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

United Nations Secretariat

Department of Economic and Social Affairs	G. Casini
	T. Marchetti

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction	F. Pisano
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United Nations Office for Project Services	A. Retiere
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United Nations Office at Vienna Office for Outer Space Affairs	M. Othman S. Camacho C. Davies
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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	N. Ratanavong
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Economic Commission for Africa	A. Gulaid
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United Nations bodies

United Nations Environment Programme	R. G. Witt
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Specialized agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	J. U. Hielkema G. Banting
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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	R. Missotten
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International Telecommunication Union	A. Matas
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World Meteorological Organization	D. Hinsman
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Observers

Committee on Earth Observation Satellites	J. Aschbacher
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Annex II

Agenda for the twenty-second session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Rome from 23 to 25 January 2002

1. Opening of the Meeting.
2. Election of the Chairman.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the areas of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Methods to strengthen further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities;
 - (c) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of organizations of the United Nations system.
5. Promoting the applications of space technology in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.
6. Review of electronic information networking in the United Nations system.
7. Review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III).
8. Other matters:
 - (a) Future meetings;
 - (b) Additional matters.

